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report

THE MOBILE CITY: THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LOCATIVE MEDIA IN THE CITY

Stephen Graham: 'Finding new possibilities for changing the spatial and temporal resistance of living in the city.'

The Dutch Architecture institute (NAi) hosted *The Mobile City conference* on 27-28th of February, 2008. The day provided both a theoretical and practical context to the multitude of topics applicable to the subject of the "mobile city". Speakers such as Steve Graham, Tim Creswell, Christian Nold and Malcolm McCullough gave their insightful views on locative media applied to the city. The conference was organised by the *New Media, Public Sphere and Urban Culture* programme of the University of Groningen (Martijn de Waal) and *Playful Identities* of the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the University of Utrecht (Michiel de Lange). Extensive coverage is available on the [Mobile City website](#).



mobilecity nai nicholasnova.jpg - By Nicholas Nova -
www.flickr.com/photos/nnova/

The rise of mobile, locative media is clearly evident. The conference description couldn't be more on the spot: 'The physical, geographical city with its piazza's, its neighborhoods and highway interchanges is overlaid with the 'virtual space' of electronic communication-, information- and observation-networks of GSM, GPS, CCTV, UMTS, WIFI, RFID, ETC. At the same time, the domain of digital space is increasingly becoming physical, an "internet of things". And the questions posed are highly relevant to the city landscape, changing under the influence of locative media: What are useful concepts to talk about the merging of physical and digital spaces? What does it mean for urban culture, citizenship and identities? And what does it mean for the world of urban professionals (architects, designers, planners), media designers, and academics?

First off, where does it come from? As [Malcolm McCullough](#) explains: Architects always interacted with use of media. To exemplify this, he mentions an interesting example of Rome. Houses in ancient Rome were all over the place, as if you could simply put your house next to the people you wanted to speak to. In similar ways, neon signs, or in an earlier stage advertisement posters, change the cityscape. McCullough exemplifies this by showing a famous crossing with and without advertisement. It has become an essential part of the city.

Theory

Locative Media Autopsy

Locative Media Autopsy was the straightforward title of [Christian Nold's](#) presentation in the early afternoon. He takes us back to an essential, but arguably overlooked, question: What is locative media exactly? It goes beyond the concept of the top-down vision of the Gods. And perhaps it should it also go beyond a "techno-fetistic" vision, as Nold asks another question: 'What kind of social relations are generated by this "technofetishism"?' Continuing, Nold mentions that we should not perhaps focus so much on "classic" locative media terms such as gather, share, play, visualise and imagine. But more on terms that encompass social relations: collaborate, archive, educate, challenge, change behaviour and organise.

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interview:

1 MEDIALAB ENSCHEDE: INNOVATIEF PLATFORM VOOR MEDIKUNST

Interview met Wilja Jurg over nieuw initiatief en kunst in het oosten



Een van de nieuwste 'Labs' in het land is ongetwijfeld het Medialab Enschede, een innovatief platform voor mediakunst. Onder de ...

interview:

STUDENTEN HAN ORGANISEREN LOCATIVE MEDIA EVENT

Fred Dijkstra, student en mede-organisator: 'Ik sta er telkens weer versteld van wat er mogelijk is in mijn vakgebied.'



Op 18 januari wordt in Arnhem het Locative Media Event georganiseerd door studenten van de Hogeschool Arnhem-Nijmegen. Dit ...

feature, interview, report:

THE DYNAMICS OF MAKING

Conversation with Daan Roosegaarde
Rob van Kranenburg, Martine Posthumus de Boer - There is more information available at our fingertips during a walk in the woods, says Mark Weiser, than in any computer system, "yet ...

54.780 WOORDEN OVER NIEUWE MEDIA CULTUUR IN NEDERLAND

Network Cultures i.s.m. Sandberg Instituut



Uit de inleiding door Theo Ploeg en Marieke Kruijthof: Oude en nieuwe media spelen een steeds grotere rol in onze huidige ...

vision, report:

3 DE CREATIEVE INDUSTRIE IS (NOG) GEEN SECTOR:

gedeelte bevindingen over de Creatieve Industrie

Rob van Kranenburg, Antoinette Hoes - De huidige definities van de Creatieve Industrie omvatten een enorme diversiteit aan bedrijven, individuen en organisaties met zeer ...

vision, report:

Nold emphasizes that it is important that locative media is taken seriously, instead of being just a nice gadget. Nold: 'Taking pictures with mobile phones is getting more serious.' A next step in design could be designing for responsive communities and getting involved with people. An example of this from Nold's work is his wellknown BioMapping project, but also his communal noise mapping project. For this project, Nold handed out decibel meters, which allowed the community to challenge "official" government numbers. The data so far was based on total noise levels and not on specific individual experience. Therefore the project also included adjective ratings such for sound such as: 'silent, extremely quiet, bassy, painful, exhausting, threatening, abrupt.'

Consumerisation, Securitisation and Activism

Locative media, therefore, can be restructured to serve needs of communities. Something Stephen Graham also mentions in his evening session: 'We need to look more at how these new media are layering over existing infrastructures and providing new ways to restructure and reorganise them: the newspaper, the street, the electric systems. And it is constituted through remediation, not in a distant cyberspace.'



stephen graham mobile city2 jaccoorg.jpg By Jacco.org - www.flickr.com/photos/jaccodotorg/

There are three different approaches towards mobile media that Graham discusses, being Consumerisation, Securitisation and Militarisation and Art / Activism. For consumerisation, Graham's essential term is "software sorting", which is about using locative media 'where markets before didn't seem to work. It is about monopolizing: People are experiencing certain spaces as a commodity rather than as a public good. As you bring in the GPS system, you can actually start to commercialize things such as roadscape.' Another important notion is that of congestion. Graham mentions vivid examples of the internet and call centers, who use congestions to prioritize certain clients. What effect could this have for locative media? Graham: 'What happens when RFID moves into the mall? The automatic detection of individuals could possibly give operators the ability to detect who is going to the market, even before they get there. They could be excluded based on electronic lists of "socially undesirable".'

Graham concludes that 'we are talking about the politics of urban space. There are multiple visions and trajectories. People, agencies, institutions are struggling and experimenting with these innovations and these are all efforts of remediation. They are changing the politics of existing spaces and infrastructures.' An important question remains: 'What is the relationship between the cultural drive and the commercial drive? Is there a healthy co-existence or a type of David and Goliath relationship?' In the end, it is perhaps most about 'finding new possibilities for changing the spatial and temporal resistance of living in the city.'

Practice

Projects

Besides theoretical context, practical projects were also featured in between the keynotes. Presentations included some projects on the forefront of locative media, such as data visualisation, wireless connectivity and social uses for RFID. This is an overview of the projects presented.

Esther Polak - NomadicMILK

Well-known for her work on Amsterdam RealTime, Polak presented her work-in-progress project NomadicMILK, in which she follows Fulani cattle herdsman and dairy truckers in Nigeria. Through a GPS enabled robot, trails are made visible to the local inhabitants. An important aspect of the project is reflecting on the trails with locals and let them see their daily routes in new ways. www.beelddikt.nl

BIOSECURITY

Presentation for Vigo BioSecure Workshop



Rob van Kranenburg - In this paper I will sketch converging trends in current perspectives on art and the body, and society and the hybrid identities of ...

MYCREATIVITY READER

Critical Research into Creative Industries

ON CREATIVITY On November 16-18, 2006

the Institute of Network Cultures and the Centre for Media Research, University of Ulster organised ...

OPEN 13: DE OPKOMST VAN INFORMELE MEDIA

Hoe zoekmachines, weblogs en YouTube de publieke meningsvorming veranderen



De publieke massamedia zijn niet langer de belangrijkste podia van openbaarheid, meningsvorming en reflectie. Ze staan onder druk van ...



NomadicMILK.jpgNomadic MILK project by Esther Polak

James Stewart - Branded Meeting Places

Stewart works at the School of Art Culture and Environment, Edinburgh UK. He presented the "Branded Meeting Places" project, which deals with 'ubiquitous technologies and the design of places for meaningful human encounter'.

Naturally, 'people are drawn to places that have particular meanings as loci of human encounter. Communications technologies are implicated in this move into the variegated brandscape.' The Branded Meeting Places team gathers evidence for the assertions about the rise of branded meeting places.

ace.caad.ed.ac.uk/NonPlace/

Laurence Claeys & Marc Godon - Smarttouch

What influence does touch have in designing new technologies and moreover, what are the possibilities of touch as an interface? An interesting project and presentation, with a very relevant title: "Let the Homo Ludens conquer the city".

www.vtt.fi/proj/smarttouch/index.jsp?lang=en

Thomas Engel - NavBall

For those that attended Picnic '07, and more specifically Waag Society's "Come Out And Play" event, NavBall might sound familiar. A soccer-type game that uses GPS technology and mobile media and turns the city into a playground.

navball.wordpress.com/

Jeroen van Schaik - Urbanism on Track

The Delft University of Technology presented its Urbanism on Track event, which was held January 7th 2007. While urban design and planning focuses strongly on actor-oriented and user-oriented design and planning approaches, technologies that give insight into the behavior of actors and users are rapidly evolving.

Especially the use of tracking technologies – of which GPS (Global Positioning System) is best known – is booming in urban research. An important aspect of this is the relation between spatial and time issues. Tracking technologies can offer these possibilities to urban design. A book will be available in May 2008.

www.bk.tudelft.nl/urbanismontrack

www.spatiametro.org

www.networkcity.bk.tudelft.nl

Martin Rieser - Mobile Audience

Martin Rieser of De Montfort University talks about the Mobile Audience. This project is about engaging people in new spaces, tales of the uncanny around the city and the "ghostly"; events that are happening simultaneously around the city. The Electric Pavillion website has an innovative database of city maps, poems and more created using mobile technologies.

www.mobileaudience.blogspot.com/

www.electricpavillion.org.uk/starshed



Electric Pavillion.jpgThe Electric Pavillion - Velocity

CityLive

CityLive is, partly, about turning Hasselt en Leuven into a wireless city. Besides being an innovative project, an interesting challenge was mentioned: incompatibility, which is essential in having users interact with the city on a large scale.

www.i-city.be/
www.ibrussel2008.com

Stalkshow

V2, Institute for Unstable Media, presented a project by Karen Lancel called the Stalkshow. Stalkshow deals with threat of unsafety and isolation. It invites the audience to provide this threat with a personal face and space; to show both its horror and its beauty. A backpack with laptop/touchscreen is carried through public spaces. Being surrounded by the audience you are invited to touch the touchscreen and to navigate through an archive of texts about threat of unsafety and isolation.

www.stalkshow.org
www.lancelmaat.nl

Willem Velthoven - Social RFID

Willem Velthoven presented the interesting outcomes of RFID workshops at Picnic '07. Most importantly, it shows that useful and interesting applications can be created by using rather simple technologies. Think of a tea-cup that Googles your name and displays it as you put in your RFID tag (iTea), or the ability to print a type of business cards which requires both people to meet up at an event (and get a free drink if you go to the bar with them).

www.mediamatic.net



mediamatics itea.jpgMediamatic - iTea at Picnic Conference:

www.mediamatic.net/attachment-22957-en.html

Ronald Lenz - Waag Society (Mobile Learning Game Kit)

Lenz presented project of the Waag that incorporate locative media and education. Examples of these are Frequency 1550, a city game using locative media that lets school children explore Amsterdam in new ways. The Mobile Learning Game Kit enables teacher themselves to moderate sessions for their schools.

www.mlgk.nl/
freq1550.waag.org

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